**Expansion of air services in Kerala**

1505. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Kerala has become a well accepted tourist destination for domestic as well as foreign tourists;

(b) if so, whether there are adequate flights to cater to the needs of both domestic and foreign tourists;

(c) whether the State Government of Kerala have requested for increasing the number of flights in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir. Kerala is very well connected with various destinations, both domestic and foreign. Besides Indian carriers like Air India, Air India Express, Indian Airlines, Jet Airways, Sahara Airlines, Air Deccan, Kingfisher Airlines, Go Air and Paramount Airways, foreign carriers like Gulf Air, Emirates, Kuwait Airlines, Oman Air, Qatar Airways, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Mahan Air, Silk Air and Sri Lankan Air are also operating to/from Kerala.

(c) Yes, Sir. References have been received from Chief Minister of Kerala, Hon'ble Members of Parliament and Pune Malayalee Federation on the issue.

(d) Indian Airlines has plans to increase its operations to/from Kerala subject to availabilityof resources with the airline and commercial viability of such operations. Further, traffic rights to foreign countries on Kerala routes has been considerably enhanced in recent times.

**Private operators in international routes**

1506. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATON be pleased to state:

(a) whether any criteria has been relaxed for private-operators to fly to international routes; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

**New Flying Institute at Gondia**

1507. SHRI SHARAD YADAV: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to establish Rajiv Gandhi National Flying Institute at Gondia in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the reasons for selecting remote area of Gondia for setting up of Flying Institute;

(c) whether Government have taken the permission of Cabinet for setting up this Institute;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) whether Government would consider other accessible places as well in consultation with other State Governments for setting up of the Institute and if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Gondia has some unique positional advantages. Its remote locations has an added advantage of least interference from other airlines operations and availability of airspace around Gondia for trainee aircraft operations of the institute round-the-clock. Further, it is a district headquarter and geographically located at almost the center of India and has an operational Birsi airfield located about 76 Nautical Miles East of Nagpur Airport. This renders the opportunity of lesser investment due to existing availability of infrastructure and smoothness of trainee aircraft operations.

(c) and (d) The proposal at present, is at appraisal stage.

(e) As of now Central Government has Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademi at Rae Bareli in Uttar Pradesh, which is a premier flying